

**MINUTES OF MEETING  
BOARD OF HUMAN SERVICES  
HELD  
May 16, 2012**

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Tiena Fletcher, Chair  
Monica Walters, Secretary  
Scott Johnson  
Randy Smith  
Jack Williams

**BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Lisa Alexander  
Frank Auman  
Sandra Smith  
Ann White

Ms. Tiena Fletcher, Chair, called the Department of Human Services' (DHS) Board meeting to order at 1:50 p.m., May 16, 2012 and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

## **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A motion was made and seconded that the minutes of the March 21, 2012 and April 18, 2012 meetings be approved. There being no further discussion, the motion passed.

## **COMMISSIONER'S REPORT**

Commissioner Clyde L. Reese III reported on the Vocational Rehabilitation transition. This will be the largest attached agency in the state of Georgia. The Commissioner will appoint a full-time liaison to the new agency. Once the agency is up and running we will need someone to consult with on a regular basis. This will allow the DHS staff that has been working in the transition process to return to their regular duties. The Commissioner will probably announce the appointment at next month's meeting.

Next, the Commissioner reported on recent publicity about the use of EBT cards and TANF money in establishments such as liquor stores, casinos, etc. A recent law has been passed on the national level by Congress to expressly prohibit the use of TANF dollars in those establishments. Now states are in the process of working to implement that new restriction. States have two years to come up with a plan. In Georgia we want to work in the interim to complete this area prior to two years. Currently we have, through our EBT cards and through the card with the peach, food stamp dollars loaded as well as TANF dollars. There are very strict and well known restrictions on the use of the food stamp benefit – not as much on the TANF side. There really have been no express prohibitions on the use of that money beyond the general guiding principle of for the well being of children. We think that this is a small subset of TANF recipients. The TANF roles are down to a little over 18,000 people in the state. The overall majority of those, almost two-thirds or more, are grandparents receiving benefits on behalf of grandchildren where there are no parents to receive the benefits for those children. There is a smaller subset of parents who are receiving benefits. We think that's where the majority of this misuse of spending is occurring. We have very little ability at the present time to deter or track cash withdrawals from ATM machines of the TANF dollars, their subsequent use and where they are being used. Several initiatives will be taken to get the word out to prohibit the misuse of TANF dollars and EBT cards in the kinds of establishments mentioned. 1.) We will engage the media in this effort, 2.) On the family services agreement that TANF recipients sign; on their annual renewal application; and on education materials and, 3.) We will ask the public to help identify individuals they see using the card in these ways so we can seek to terminate their benefits. There will be zero tolerance and the sanction will be

termination of benefits pending a hearing. The Governor has asked us to address this area in furtherance of compliance with the federal statutes' two year period. The Board will be given updates.

The Commissioner expressed the need to develop a process to track, on a periodic basis, children and families that have been provided services so that we can, to the greatest extent possible, reduce adverse events and tragedies, such as abuse and neglect that result in child deaths. That process is unfolding, and the counties are being trained in implementing that model. It's all part of a larger safety model that will be rolled out over a period of 18 months to two years. The Board will be given updates on this process.

At last month's Board meeting, the Commissioner spoke of the SNAP redistribution schedule. DHS is extending the issuance of SNAP benefits to give stores a better opportunity to keep their shelves well stocked and ultimately better serve their customers. Starting in September 2012, SNAP benefits will be added to EBT accounts between the 5<sup>th</sup> and the 23<sup>rd</sup> of each month. During August, customers will be transitioned to the new schedule by receiving half their benefits on the current date and half on their new benefit date. DHS will work with partners to educate SNAP clients on the new distribution schedule. We want to make certain there will be no disruptions to services.

Last month Lisa Marie Shekell mentioned in her legislative report that the senate passed a resolution to create a senate study committee on aging. This is a committee chaired by Senator Renee Unterman. They will look at aging services, funding and new issues that have come about as a result of the tremendous expansion of the aging population, particularly those persons 80 and older – almost a new universe of people that haven't existed before. DHS will provide technical assistance to that committee through the Division of Aging. We will not take a position on any initiatives they might want to debate but our staff will be there to provide information and technical assistance. At the end of the summer an update will be given on what was discussed and any recommendations they might want to make to the General Assembly at the end of this year.

Finally, the TANF drug testing law was passed and signed by the Governor shortly after the General Assembly ended. It imposed a new requirement on the agency to test the TANF applicants for certain drugs. We will be required to determine what those drugs are, and the list of drugs being tested for. The legislation requires DHS to promulgate and implement administrative rules. This is a large, complicated endeavor, and we are in the early stages of looking at what the formal rules will look like. The process will then continue through Board approval, public comment and hearings. The Board will be given updates.

That concluded the Commissioner's report.

## **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

Ms. Fletcher asked if anyone had comments or questions. There being none, the meeting adjourned at 2:03 p.m.

## **THE NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Board of Human Services will be Wednesday, June 20, 2012, Two Peachtree Street, N.W., Suite 29.250, Atlanta, Georgia 30303.



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**Monica Walters, Secretary**

## **APPROVED:**



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**Tiena Fletcher, Chair**